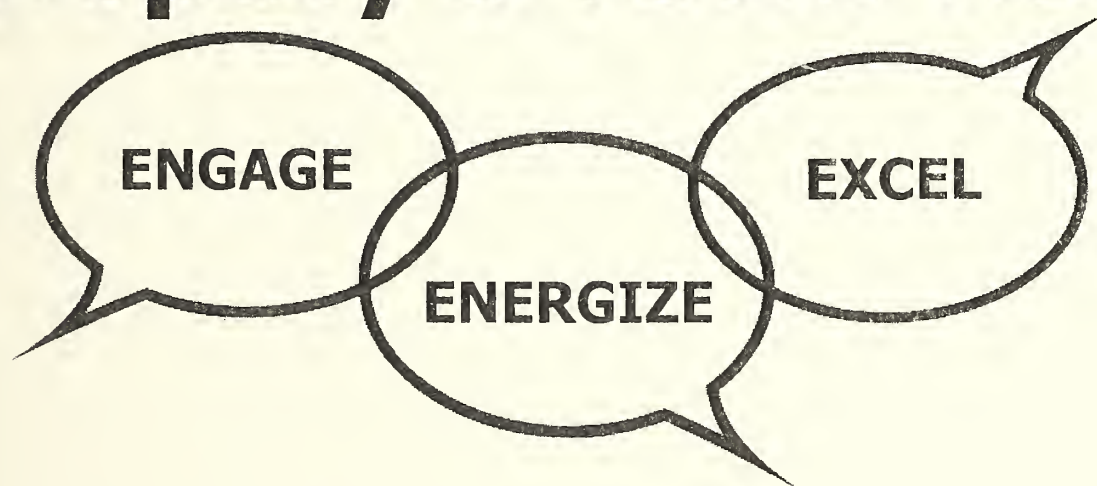




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# Deputy's Town Hall



## 2013 Town Hall Report Back Summary

Ministry of the Attorney General

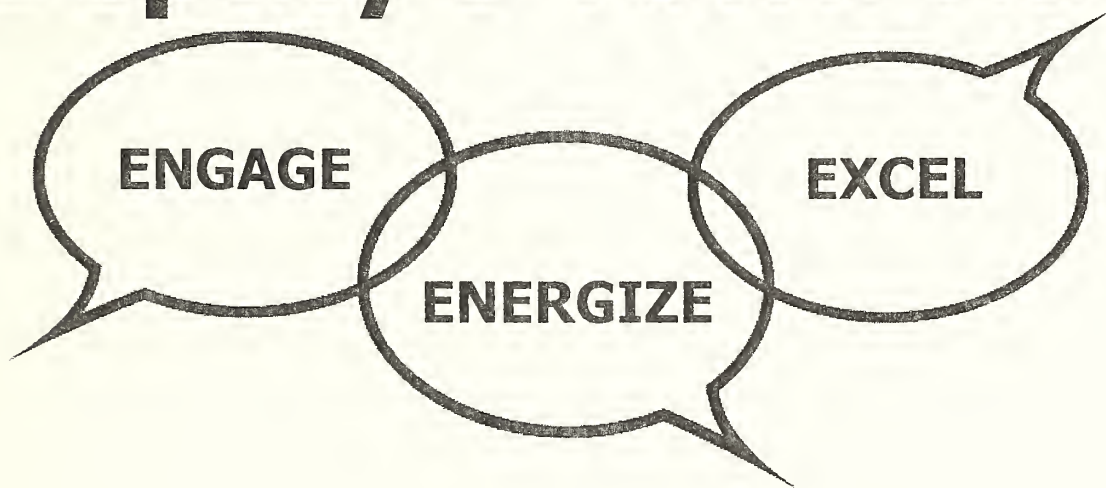
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## 2013 Town Hall Report Back Summary

Ministry of the Attorney General



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## Executive Summary

Employees at the Ministry of the Attorney General met with Ontario's Deputy Attorney General, Patrick Monahan, and participated in a ministry-wide conversation about employee engagement at a series of town hall sessions. The Town Hall Series took place across the province from March to June 2013, and brought together staff from all divisions, at every level, to celebrate achievements, highlight best practices, share experiences and suggest areas for improvement.

The Deputy was joined by members of the Senior Management Committee at each location. All ministry employees, from management to front line staff across all divisions were invited to participate. These were workshop style sessions where staff had an opportunity to discuss areas for improvement and change in the future. The focus of discussions were Service Excellence (and Job Satisfaction), Recognition, Engagement, and Communication.

Key findings from employee feedback developed into five themes:

1. Visible Leaders;
2. Connect with the strategic plan;
3. Improve internal communications;
4. Enable business improvement and innovation; and
5. Make recognition meaningful.

Each theme is presented with potential employee engagement strategies for consideration. Specific implementation actions follow.

The Deputy committed to report back to all employees in the fall of 2013 on the results of the Town Hall discussions and this report outlines how the ministry will be responding.

*"Engagement is a leadership issue" – Deputy Patrick Monahan*



## Introduction

The Deputy Attorney General Patrick Monahan, and the Ministry of the Attorney General senior management team, travelled across Ontario Province to meet with employees for a series of employee engagement town hall sessions. From March until June 2013, eight town hall sessions were held in Toronto, Hamilton, Sudbury, Ottawa, Newmarket, Kitchener/Waterloo, and Thunder Bay. All ministry employees, from management to front line staff across all divisions were invited to participate.

These town hall sessions were intended to give staff a chance to explore, in workshop format, how all employees can contribute more effectively in providing service to the public. This was also an opportunity to celebrate achievements, highlight best practices, share experiences and suggest areas for improvement.

The learning outcomes for the town hall sessions were identified as follows:

- Provide an opportunity for all staff to meet the Deputy Attorney General and Senior Management Committee representatives and share experiences with them;
- Learn what the ministry has done to respond to the 2011 OPS Employee Engagement Survey;
- Hear about best practices and provide suggestions for improvement for creating a more positive and engaged work environment; and
- Engage with colleagues, both within and outside of business areas/divisions.

The Deputy committed to report back to all employees on the results of the Town Hall discussions in the fall of 2013. This report provides key findings and emerging themes resulting from the town hall sessions along with potential employee engagement initiatives. Specific implementation actions are presented.

*"I was able to express my views and felt that I was heard" –Town Hall Participant.*



## Town Hall Discussion Topics

The town hall sessions were conducted in a workshop style format, with employees grouped at tables for discussions. Participants were able to select their preferred discussion topic ranging from Service Excellence (and Job Satisfaction), Recognition, Engagement, and Communication. Each group discussed their topic in general terms, as well as considered specific questions under each of the categories. Below are the specific questions:

### Service Excellence:

- How do you provide a high quality of service every day?
- What tools and supports would help you to do your job better?
- What would increase your satisfaction with your job?

### Recognition:

- How can we do a better job of recognizing employees for a job well done?
- What forms of employee recognition matter to you?

### Engagement:

- Do you feel engaged with your job? If the answer is “yes” – what contributes to that? If the answer is “no” – why not?
- What difference do you see between an employee who is engaged and one who is not?

### Communication:

- Do you think that management works to address issues raised in the employee engagement survey?
- What kind of feedback would you like to provide to senior leaders/senior management, and how?

The town halls ended with a Question and Answer session with the Deputy, and open discussion.

*“I thank the Deputy for creating an open and welcoming environment”  
– Town Hall Participant*

## **Key Findings, Themes and Actions**

### **Engagement Scorecard Index Priority Areas: Leadership Practices and Organizational Communication**

The greatest correlation between feedback from the Town Hall sessions and engagement priorities concern leadership practices and organizational communication. The leadership index, one of four engagement scorecard indices, reports on employees' perceptions on the quality of leadership and supervision they receive. The leadership index includes themes such as direct supervision, clear expectations and direction, organizational communication and leadership practices. (See Appendix B; Figure B. 5.)

This ministry's priority areas for engagement from the 2009 and 2011 employee surveys include leadership practices and organizational communication. The ministry has scored low on questions related to planning for the future and the flow of information between senior leaders and staff. In 2011 only 35% of ministry survey respondents agreed that essential information flows effectively from senior leaders to staff, and there is 36% agreement that essential information flows effectively from staff to senior leaders.

The following themes are related to these engagement priorities, and the implementation actions for each aim to improve the flow of information in the organization downward and upward between staff and senior leaders:

- Visible Leaders;
- Connect with the strategic plan; and
- Improve internal communications.

#### **Theme 1 – Visible Leaders**

The Town Halls garnered an overwhelmingly positive response from participants. Collectively the town hall sessions were rated as informative (75%), and effective/useful (79%). 78% of participants felt that their contribution was valued, 63% that they were effectively engaged, and 73% were confident that their ideas discussed would be considered for action. A large majority of participants asked for more town hall sessions, and to have these more frequently. (See Appendix A for Feedback Survey Summary Results)

Group table discussions also reinforced the desire for more town hall events or opportunities, with the rationale that leaders should be more visible to staff. This

extends to leaders visiting front-line staff, visiting specific job sites and to be seen on the shop floor.

Staff also felt that more town hall sessions would provide them with direct contact with senior managers without filters between themselves and senior leaders.

Visible leadership is one of the characteristics of a best employer. Hewitt and Associates' Best Employers Study (2004) identified this as leaders who are visible throughout the company, communicate with employees frequently, and are personally involved in developing talent.

Projects such as Justice on Target have already established a precedent of divisional collaboration and visible leadership.

Within divisions, leaders are regularly visiting regions such as the "ADAG on the road" series and facilitating courtside chats. These are sessions taking place across the province and provide employees with an opportunity to engage with their colleagues, learn more about divisional priorities, and to share ideas and feedback on what is working well and where there are areas for improvement.

### **Implementation Action:**

#### **Establish cross-divisional regional round tables**

Provide a forum for senior management to regularly engage with staff across regions and divisions. Focus discussions on ministry and divisional strategic priorities such as:

- Mission, vision, values and strategic plan;
- Change management and/or organizational transformation;
- Business improvement and innovation,
- Leadership at MAG.

Additionally, a recognition or celebration component should be incorporated into one or more of the sessions.

Lynne Wagner, ADAG of Court Services Division, and Louise Stratford, Acting ADAG of Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division, will co-lead this initiative and connect with other ADAGs with regional staff.

The inaugural Directors' Fall Conference MAG is organizing for October 2013 will also provide a venue for cross-divisional collaboration and an opportunity for conference participants to identify meaningful content for future staff regional roundtable sessions.

## **Theme 2 – Connect with the strategic plan**

Employees participating in the town hall session discussions wanted to know more about the ministry's mission, vision, strategic plan and priorities. Many wanted to understand the link between their performance plan, their day-to-day work and the organization's mission and mandate. Others were interested in learning more about the context for decisions and the reasons why the decision was made.

Research has shown that engagement levels increase when employees are clear about how their role contributes to the priorities of the organization. "Engagement is all about aligning individuals with the organization - performance improves when day-to-day efforts and activities of individual employees is aligned with strategic intent". (The Engagement/Performance Equation, Lombardi, Aberdeen Group, 2011.)

The ministry is currently engaged in a strategic planning process. The communication plan and roll out of the strategic process should include tools for directors and managers to discuss/address how the strategic plan links to their employees' work.

### **Implementation Action:**

#### **Enable managers to communicate the strategic plan and related work linkages to staff and embed into performance plans**

Support materials will be provided to managers as part of the package to communicate the ministry, and divisional, strategic plan.

Additionally, the HRSBU will prepare resource tools to assist divisions in embedding aspects of the strategic plan into performance plans.

## **Theme 3 – Improve internal communications**

Employees asked for improvements in communications with the use of multiple communication channels including social media, improving the quality of face-to-face meetings, and ensuring consistency of communication across regions.

Employees would like to balance an overload of email communications with more in-person conversations or enhanced two-way conversations. This would entail more timely staff meetings, as well as the opportunity to provide input and feedback at these meetings.



Employee engagement research shows that meaningful two-way communication at the local level is most impactful on levels of engagement. A top activity to improve engagement is frequent informal feedback with the direct manager and updates from senior leadership on the organizational vision and performance. (The Engagement/Performance Equation, Lombardi, Aberdeen Group, 2011.)

Engagement Strategy options should be considered to address improving managers' communications skills, communications planning, and providing staff with opportunities for input.

Communications Planning – increasing the capacity of divisions to develop communications plans for initiatives could include:

Existing best practice tools such as the “OPS Manager’s Guide to Internal Communications”. This guide is a useful resource of communication best practices for managers, and includes a quick guide to various communications channels in the OPS and how to use to their best advantage.

It would also be helpful to provide reminders to managers in correspondence and other manager alerts to “please include and discuss with your staff at your next staff meeting”.

Divisions developing communication action plans to ensure that their communications are consistent across regions. Communication plans could also formalize a process to “bundle” information regarding similar topics thus avoiding excessive emails.

“Meeting in a box” resources for managers as part of communications plans where appropriate.

Staff Input - Staff advisory groups can provide ongoing opportunities for employees to continue to engage with senior leaders and exchange information without management “filters”. Staff members can provide feedback and advice where requested, and champion staff-level ideas to management. There are numerous staff networks within divisions.

Staff who voluntarily leave the ministry and the OPS could provide feedback about their work experience, to describe their reasons for leaving and to offer suggestions for improvement.

## **Implementation Actions:**

### **Enable managers to be more strategic and effective in communicating with staff**

Ensure that managers have the skills to communicate well, and that their communication is two-way, open, clear, accessible, timely and frequent. This will include practical training with demonstrations for managers, focussing on complex change management situations.

This will be part of the Leadership Development curriculum that is currently under development.

As a first step towards this commitment, a session on internal communications will be included as a component of the agenda at the MAG Directors' Fall Conference being held in October 2013.

### **Promote available best practice communication resources to managers**

MAG will market the availability and use of the "OPS Manager's Guide to Internal Communications". Incorporate communication best practices in divisional communication plans. Provide template communication plans for divisional use.

The Human Resources Strategic Business Unit, in partnership with Communications Branch, will promote the use of the above mentioned guide as a best practice for divisions to use. Communications Branch will also distribute a communication plan template.

Divisions will include information sessions on internal communications based on the same guide at forthcoming learning conferences and events. Divisions will ensure that communication plans are a key component of all initiatives.

### **Provide ongoing opportunities for small, informal staff engagement sessions with the Deputy Attorney General**

To continue the dialogue with employees initiated at the town halls, and provide further opportunities for staff to engage in informal discussions with the Deputy Attorney General, small ad hoc invitation-based staff engagement sessions are to be arranged in alignment with the Deputy's regional travel schedule. Invitations would be rotated amongst different groups to allow the Deputy to meet with a variety of staff over the course of a year.

### **Gather feedback from voluntary exits**

Conduct exit surveys of staff leaving the ministry voluntarily. Review feedback regularly to identify opportunities for improvement.

The Human Resources Strategic Business Unit, in partnership with two divisions, will pilot two processes. The divisions will implement exit surveys and monitor feedback, and the results of these pilots will be considered to inform a ministry-wide strategy.

### **Engagement Scorecard Index Priority Areas: Innovation and Recognition**

Two of the seven themes comprising the Workplace Culture Index (WCI) are identified as high priorities for the ministry, namely Independence and Innovation, and Recognition. (See Appendix B; Figure B. 3.) Independence and innovation strongly influences engagement and reflects opportunities for improvement. Recognition is the lowest scoring theme of the Workplace Culture Index and is identified as a top priority for the ministry.

Town hall feedback indicates employees are interested in collaborating with management on business improvements. Employees are also seeking more opportunities for local and informal recognition.

The following themes are related to these engagement priorities:

- Enable business improvement and innovation; and
- Make recognition meaningful.

### **Theme 4 – Enable business improvement and innovation**

Our ministry employees take pride in their work and quality of service (73%) and indicate a strong commitment to public service (77%) according to feedback from the 2011 employee survey.

At the town hall discussions employees acknowledged that process improvements could be made in business operations, as well as better use of technology to deliver services. Many employees were interested in collaborating with management to identify creative solutions and increase efficiency. However there were concerns about the lack of resources and adequate support to maintain high quality services. Some suggestions were to bring in third party review of business processes, or implement triage pilot programs in all locations.

It was also noted that service standards were not consistent across divisions and regions.



A responsive engagement strategy option should provide an avenue to support business improvements in partnership with employees.

To encourage and support innovation the ministry needs to provide conduits for employee business improvement ideas and funding to implement these. An innovation fund is under consideration as a possible outcome of the ministry strategic planning process. Other OPS examples that support innovation at the workplace include ideas campaigns; holding town hall/regional round tables or workshops on this topic; setting up funds for innovation, or employee advisory panels specific to customer service, business process improvement and change management.

Divisions should ensure that service standards are well understood, and that these are consistently applied. Recognition from members of the public for good service is important to employees. Having customer feedback mechanisms in place would provide measures of satisfaction with service delivery and quality of service. This could tie in with recognition of outstanding workers, for example naming an employee of the month.

#### **Implementation Action:**

##### **Create an innovation program for the ministry**

Encourage innovation by setting up a program for employees to provide ideas and suggestions for business improvement, and provide a funding process to support implementation of selected ideas.

The Innovation Office, in partnership with Senior Management Committee, has developed an Innovation Fund to be launched in Fall 2013.

#### **Theme 5 – Make recognition meaningful**

We heard from staff that recognition at the local level has the most impact, that recognition should be forthcoming from managers and colleagues, and that recognition should be personalized, timely and relevant to the recipient. Employees would like to receive a sincere and genuine thank you more often from their co-workers and from local management. They also would like to have more frequent staff appreciation events.

This feedback is consistent with focus group research conducted recently in the OPS where meaningful recognition was identified as being honest/genuine/individualized, constructive, spontaneous/timely, and purposeful/specific. The most meaningful forms of recognition are daily

spontaneous acts of appreciation and praise. The Conference Board of Canada found that Recognition is the top driver of Employee Engagement (HR Trends and Metrics Report, June 2010). The Building Engagement Capital Study by the Corporate Leadership Council, 2011, shows that managers must provide informal feedback and recognition at least once a month to positively impact engagement capital.

Town hall participants' preferred forms of recognition include notes of appreciation, time off from work, flexible work arrangements, learning/development opportunities, deployment in other positions and incentive pay. Employees noted that the time lag between performance results and recognition was too long.

Opportunities to recognize staff across divisions were appreciated, and should be encouraged and increased. Service as unclassified contractors and part-time workers currently do not qualify for long service awards, and these employees indicated they would like to be recognized in a manner similar to long service for classified employees.

There were many suggestions to improve the ministry's formal recognition program, Prix Excelsior Awards. Ideas ranged from simplifying the nomination process, to hosting the ceremony in regions, to having staff vote for winners. The award ceremony is located in Toronto, making some staff in the regions feel left out. Also it was felt that winners were largely determined based on the writing skill of the nominator, which was not perceived as a sufficient means to differentiate excellence. Another suggestion was to host a local celebration event after the formal awards ceremony to allow staff at the workplace to congratulate their colleagues.

Engagement strategy options should seek to encourage a culture of recognition within the ministry and to enable peer recognition.

Formal and informal recognition activities help to create a culture that enhances engagement, performance, and retention. Recognition activities help employees feel that they are valued and that they can become or emulate role models. Other benefits include improved workplace morale and productivity, and reduction in workplace stress, turnover and absenteeism.

Recognition is meaningful when it is "just in time", that is when managers and supervisors recognize positive actions/contributions right after the achievement or behaviour takes place. These are often regular, spontaneous acts or words of appreciation and praise. Staff recognizing their peers is also a key component of

recognition, as each employee plays an important role in encouraging and supporting their coworkers and team. Recognition is not solely the responsibility of the manager.

The ministry's recognition strategy should include providing managers and employees with tools and resources to provide more frequent informal recognition. Examples include promoting the use of appreciation cards and certificates; providing tangible reminders and displays in prominent locations; providing a collaborative site for posting tributes; hosting local celebration/appreciation events and ways to showcase employees.

A number of divisions already hold divisional or regional recognition events. These divisional best practices can be incorporated into an overall approach to recognition within the ministry. Divisions should also incorporate recognition activities into their business meetings and learning/development conferences.

Finally, the Prix Excelsior Awards Committee will want to review the feedback / suggestions received regarding this formal awards program.

### **Implementation Actions:**

#### **Promote available best practice recognition resources to managers and employees**

The ministry will market the availability and use of recognition products, guides and tools to managers and employees including promoting products that facilitate informal peer-to-peer recognition, and providing reminders how to celebrate long service staff.

The Human Resources Strategic Business Unit will research and promote these recognition resources.

#### **Incorporate recognition as a component in divisional communications and events**

Divisions will include some form of recognition when hosting business or learning events. Examples include celebrating achievement or long service by announcing award recipients at a work-related event; include a write-up about award recipients in divisional newsletters, blogs or director updates; host a local informal celebration to complement a formal ceremony such as Prix Excelsior Awards; provide tangible displays of awards.

As a first step, the Deputy Attorney General's has just introduced a Recognition Wall which will showcase a rotating display of photos on various themes throughout the year.

### **Develop a regional recognition approach**

Create a recognition program amongst those divisions with a regional organization structure.

Partnership of divisions including Criminal Law, Victims and Vulnerable Persons, Court Services, and possibly Social Justice Tribunals will collaborate on a regional recognition program or approach.

### **Provide town hall feedback to Prix Excelsior Awards Committee**

There were many ideas and suggestions about the ministry's formal recognition program, Prix Excelsior Awards. This feedback will be given to the committee managing the awards program.

The Human Resources Strategic Business Unit will provide the feedback received from town hall participants to the awards committee.

The Prix Excelsior Awards Committee will review, and in consultation with SMC, implement program changes deemed appropriate.

*Recognition is all about the "C"s:*

*Consistency – thanking on a regular basis, at least once a month*

*Celebration – allow others to participate in the recognition*

*Context – how you and your work fit into the picture*

*Cooking – recognition and food go hand in hand, employees like treats*

*Connection – staff need face time with each other and their managers*

*-Town Hall Feedback*



## **Implementation Actions Summary:**

The implementation actions which the ministry is committed to, as outlined in this report, are those actions identified as having the greatest impact on engagement. This was done by referencing various priority matrices which reflect the ministry's employee engagement survey scores and relative influence on employee engagement. (See Appendix B. – Priority Matrices)

### **Leadership Practices and Organizational Communication**

The following implementation actions aim to improve the flow of information in the organization downward and upward between staff and senior leaders:

1. Establish cross-divisional regional round tables
2. Enable managers to communicate the strategic plan and related work linkages to staff and embed into performance plans
3. Enable managers to be more strategic and effective in communicating with staff
4. Promote available best practice communication resources to managers
5. Provide ongoing opportunities for small, informal staff engagement sessions with the Deputy Attorney General
6. Gather feedback from voluntary exits

### **Independence & Innovation and Recognition**

The following implementation actions focus on the engagement priority areas of business improvement and recognition:

7. Create an innovation program for the ministry
8. Promote available best practice recognition resources to managers and employees
9. Incorporate recognition as a component in divisional communications and events
10. Develop a regional recognition approach
11. Provide town hall feedback to the Prix Excelsior Awards Committee

## Appendix A: Feedback Survey Summary of Results

### Toronto #1, Hamilton, Sudbury, Ottawa, Newmarket, Waterloo, Thunder Bay & Toronto #2 Sessions Combined

1. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

(1) is Strongly Disagree and (5) is Strongly Agree

Questions asked	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
	(1-2)	(3)	(4-5)
The session was informative	5%	20%	75%
The activities were effective and useful	3%	18%	79%
I feel that my contribution was valued	4%	17%	78%
I feel confident that the ideas discussed will be considered for action	7%	20%	73%

2. How effective was this Town Hall session in making you feel engaged?

Engagement	Percentage
Very effective	63%
Somewhat effective	35%
Not effective	3%

3. What did you like **most** about the Town Hall session?

*Common responses:*

- The Deputy Attorney General (great speaker, down to earth, very engaged)
- Open conversation – listening to the perspectives of staff from different divisions
- Great networking opportunity
- The topics and branch-off groups
- Informality of session – relaxed and welcoming atmosphere
- Group sessions

4. What did you like least about the Town Hall session?

*Common responses:*

- Lack of time!
- Repetition of topics/ feedback
- Having management present/ not having management present
- Venue: temperature (too warm/too cold), lack of space, poor seating arrangements/layout

5. Do you have any suggestions to improve future Town Hall sessions?

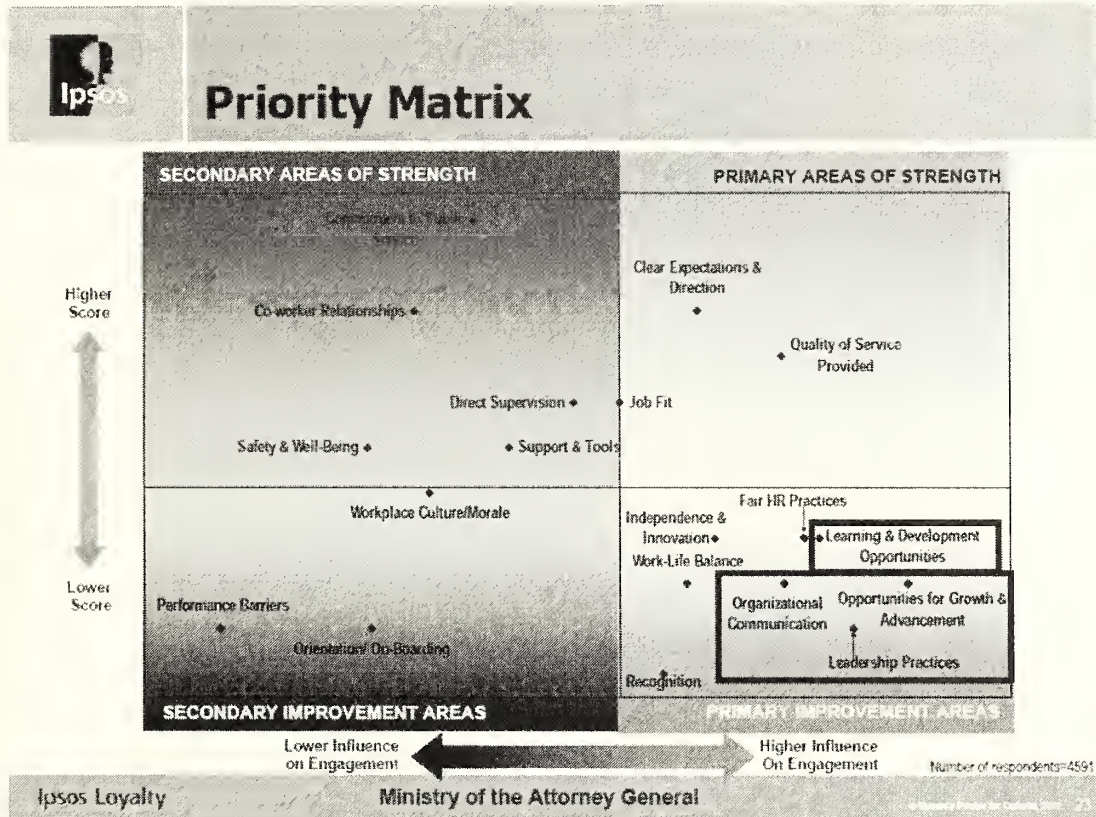
*Common responses:*

- Increase frequency/have more Town Hall Sessions
- Allow for more time (Make it a half day session) later in the day to accommodate more staff schedules
- Have seating plans to separate colleagues from one another
- Receive discussion topics/agenda in advance in order for staff to come prepared
- Ensure that employees are being heard (what actions will be taken after all sessions are completed?)
- Less repetition
- Devote time to socializing and networking
- More encouragement support to attend from management
- Mix attendance with people from different regional areas gives different perspectives



## Appendix B: Priority Matrices

Priority Matrix (2009) (Figure B. 1.)



We use a Priority Matrix to help determine which themes would likely have the strongest impact on engagement.

The priority ranking for each theme is calculated by plotting all the themes on a matrix. Each theme is plotted on the matrix according to how staff scored it (vertical axis) and how much it impacts the engagement index (horizontal axis). The highest priority areas (recommended for action) are those that show a combination of lowest score and highest impact on the EE Index through correlation analysis (formula for calculation available on request).

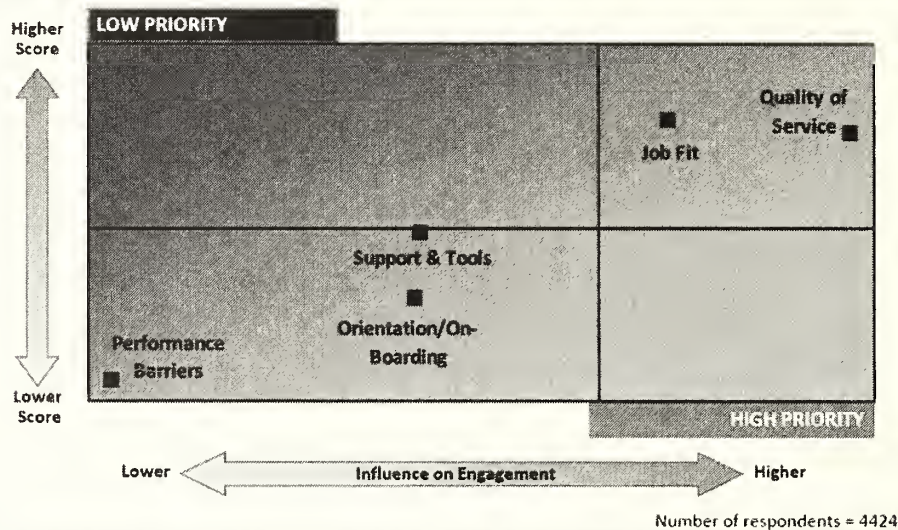
The bottom right quadrant contains the highest priority areas: where action/initiatives would likely have the greatest impact on Employee Engagement.

### Priority Matrices (2011)

This new OPS Employee Survey Reporting Framework is a “balanced scorecard” that informs and supports key corporate goals captured in the form of four Corporate Indices in addition to the overall Employee Engagement Index. The **Employee Engagement Index** measures employee satisfaction with their immediate work environment and the broader organizational culture as well as their commitment to the organization and the achievement of its goals.

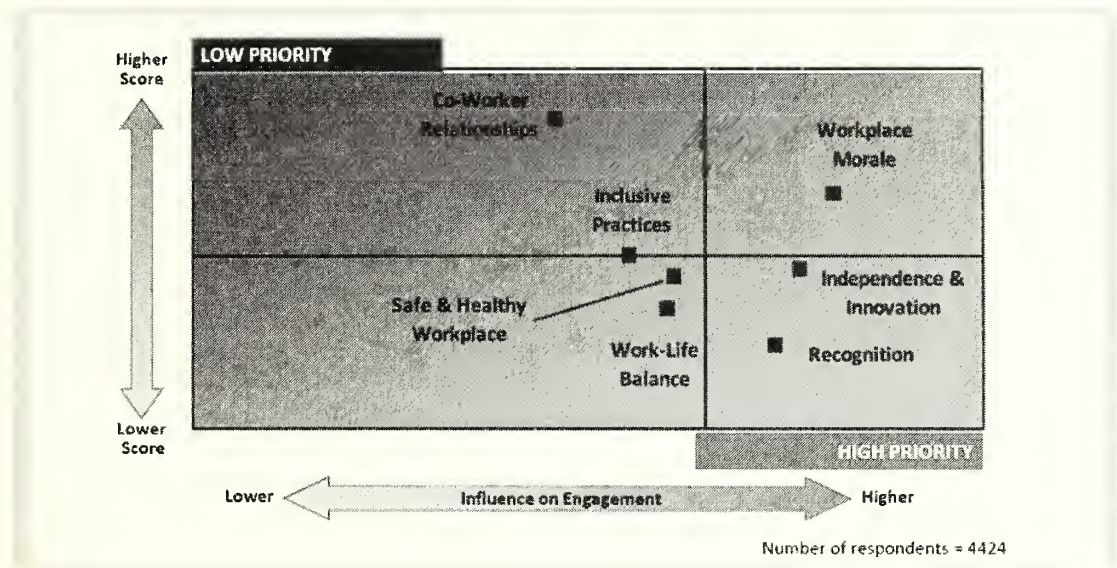
### Productive Capacity Index (PCI) (Figure B. 2.)

The **Productive Capacity Index** reports on employees' perceptions of their ability to effectively provide service and discharge their duties.



### Workplace Culture Index (WCI) (Figure B. 3.)

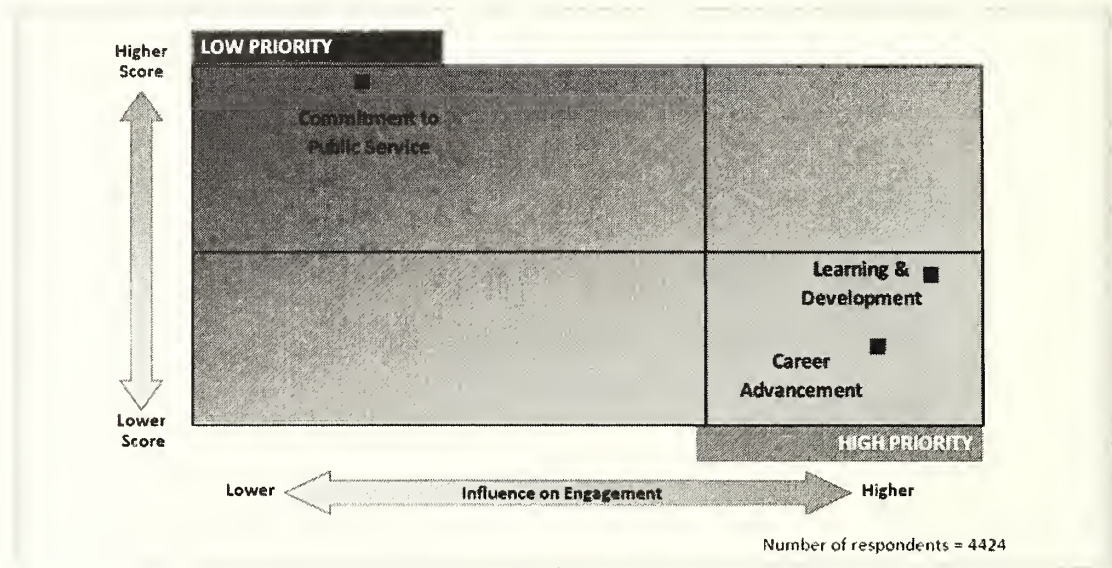
The **Workplace Culture Index** reports on employees' perceptions of the physical, social and organizational environment in which they work.





### Talent Capacity Index (TCI) (Figure B. 4.)

The **Talent Capacity Index** reports on employees' perceptions of the OPS' ability to attract, develop and optimize its human resources.



### Leadership Index (LI) (Figure B. 5)

The **Leadership Index** reports on employees' perceptions of the quality of leadership and supervision they receive.

